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ABSTRACT

An overview of the most recent ideas on managerial stress is presented along with worksheets and exercises for a program to help educational administrators, their staffs, and secretaries cope with and reduce organizational and personal stress. Research cited includes the author's survey of 1,200 Oregon school administrators and over 200 secretaries from schools and district offices. The first part of the program involves completion of stress logs to note all the different kinds and sources of stress as well as to observe the daily patterns and weekly cycles of stress. This is followed by a series of exercises to identify all possible on-the-job stressors, assess the relative impact of each, list the most bothersome ones, and decide the amount of control one has over each. A stress management program can begin with the self-diagnosis of stressors. The top five stressors are to be listed and categorized into external and internal control factors. For those stressors where internal control is possible and the actual cause of the stress can be attacked, the "Seven Steps to Managing Stress" process is recommended. The process is explained and work sheets provided. (MLF)

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# RELEASE FROM STRESS

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## PREFACE

The subject of excessive stress, effective leadership, and physical and mental health concerns us all and rests at the center of this Bulletin. It represents an attempt to bring about a greater awareness, visibility, and control of this common managerial menace. It does not represent another general stress management book to be shelved along with the already prolific and popular writings on stress, but a message written for you, the educational administrator, to help you and your staff build bridges over the barriers of organizational and personal stress.

The information shared in this Bulletin comes from three main sources: (1) the most current research and writings on stress, including the author's recent research (sponsored by the Oregon School Study Council) investigating the stresses of over 1,200 administrators; (2) critical analysis and comments from over 3,000 participants who have used the author's materials in his managerial stress workshops; and (3) the author's personal successes and mistakes in attempting to cope with both the private and public sector stressors as a business executive, educational administrator, professor, midlevel manager, counselor, researcher, and management consultant. Most authors write about what troubles them the most, and this author is no differrent. From his burning interest and burned-out experiences, the following Bulletin was created.

In sum, this Bulletin aims to provide an overview of the most recent ideas on managerial stress and to present plans of action for its reduction. It represents the third in a series of school stress publications written by Dr. Gmelch for the Oregon School Study Council and Washington's School Information and Research Service (SIRS). The first, Beyond Stress to Effective Management, provided an overview and synthesis of current stress research concepts and ideas. The second, Stress at the Desk and How to Cope Creatively, reported the results of a project conducted by Drs. Boyd Swent and Walter Gmelch to investigate the sources of stress for school administrators and how they coped.

## INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF THE MANAGERIAL STRESS CYCLE

It is helpful to establish a broad perspective and clear understanding from which to view stress; such a perspective is provided by the four-stage stress cycle portrayed in figure 1. The cycle begins with a set of demands or stressors[1] (stage I). A meeting is a demand as is a telephone interruption, but whether it produces stress depends on the individual's perception (stage II). Does he or she have the time or resources (either mentally or physically) to adequately meet the demand? If not, the manager perceives the demand as a stressor.

It is possible for the same demand to be perceived as a stressor by one individual and not by another. For example, if an administrator perceives a change in board policy as not demanding unavailable resources a discrepancy will not exist and stress will not occur. However, if another manager perceives this policy change as demanding much time of which he or she has little, a discrepancy exists and stress ensues.

The stress created by this discrepancy results in a stress response (stage III). It is here that the coping process begins. Individuals go through physiological changes (adrenal secretion, increased heart rate, and so on) that prepare them either to ignore, flee, combat, or alleviate the stressor. Although the immediate physiological response is the same for everyone, the behavioral and psychological choice to ignore, combat, flee, or alleviate is very much

a personal matter. It largely depends on the resources people have available and what has worked in the past.

The fourth and final stage, consequences, differs from responses because it takes into account the long-range effects of stress, due to its duration and intensity. If one does not alleviate some stressors and learn to cope, consequences may arise in the form of serious mental or physical illness. A growing body of evidence is pointing to this conclusion. For example, recent figures from the U.S. National Clearing House for Mental Health Information indicated a $17 billion decrease in the productive capacity of workers resulting from stress: excessive absenteeism--$5.5 billion, excessive unemployment--$2.7 billion, inefficiency on the job--$1.9 billion, and below capacity employment--$1.9 billion. These figures alone only represent the cost of stress-induced mental dysfunction; as yet no accurate account of the dollars and human capacity lost from psychosomatic and physical ailments are available. However, one in a group of psychosomatic diseases caused by stress--coronary heart disease--accounts for the deaths of over 750,000 Americans a year, 250,000 of whom are under sixty-five years of age.

The mission here is to convert these consequences in stage IV from illness to wellness, a state not just free from being ill but one where you feel good about yourself, your job performance, and your life. By taking charge and controlling the first three stages of the stress cycle, your fourth stage of wellness will come naturally. To this end I wish you success, for stress can be the spice of your life--if handled correctly.

## IDENTIFYING MANAGERIAL STRESS TRAPS

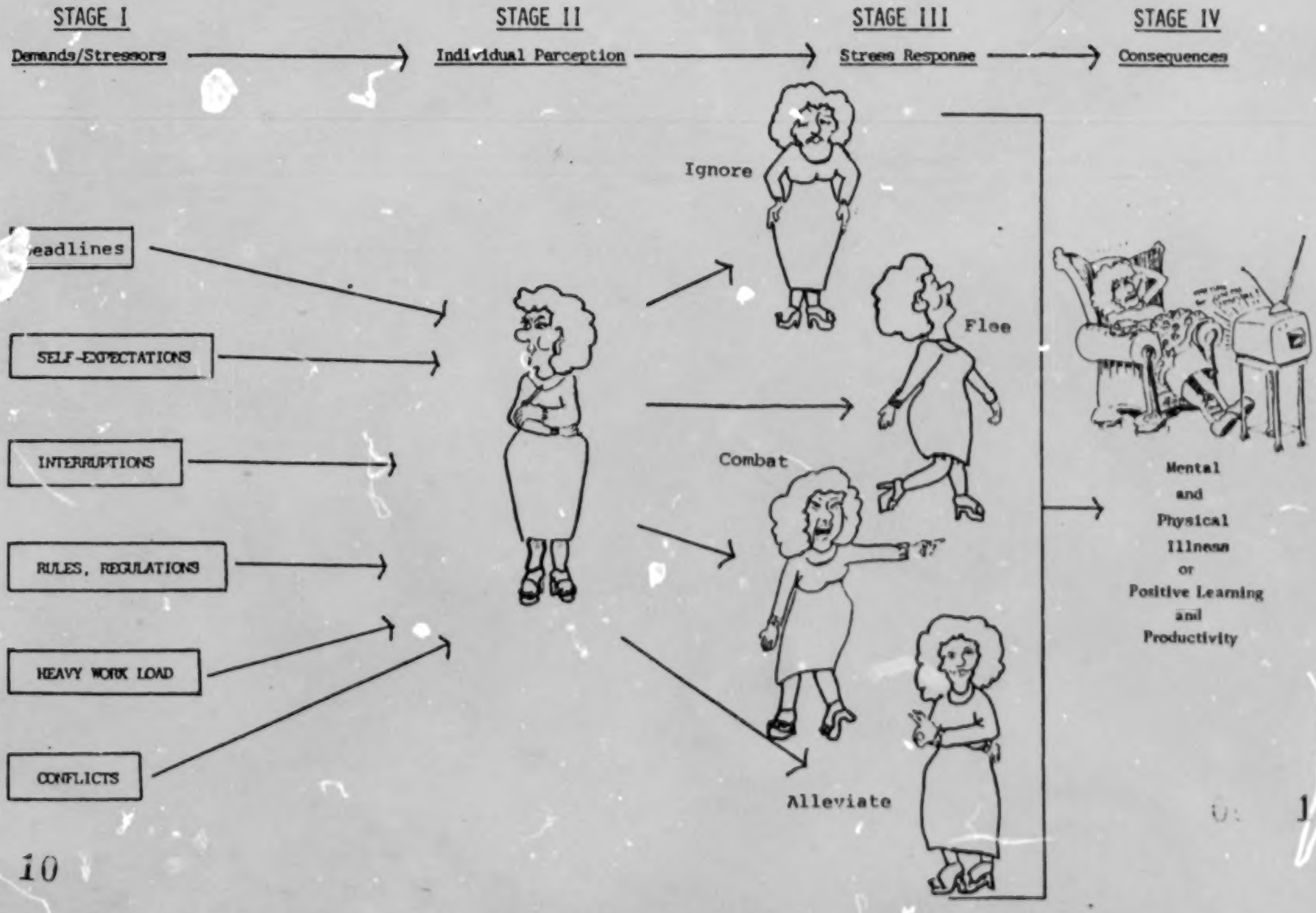
What was the first stressor? Nearly two thousand years ago an emperor of China posed a similar question to his physician: "Does not the troublesome wind cause illness?" Whatever the language and wherever the place, nature--through the forces of wind, cold, and heat--has brought about tension, depression, headaches, and other illnesses.

Even more catastrophic than the stresses of nature are those created by people themselves. These stresses are found in all aspects of life--in the environment, as a part of a person's job, by working with people, and within a person's own disposition. Figure 2 depicts the potential area of stress in four spheres--environmental, organizational, interpersonal, and personal.[2]

Separating stressors into levels (descending from environment down to personal idiosyncrasy) is more expedient than real, since significant stressors can attack at any level, in any direction, or in an unpredictable manner, shifting from level to level. You should be cognizant that stress is cumulative; although one disturbing event during the day may not be enough to reactivate an ulcer, a series of stressors over a short period of time (or several prolonged stressors) becomes synergistic and calamitous to your productivity and, even more important, to your health.

Stress seems to intensify as people move down through the various levels, eventually becoming prisoners of their environments,

# THE STRESS CYCLE



work, colleagues, and their own dispositions. Locked in as stress prisoners, the only salvation for people is to begin to get control over their lives and to learn the strategies of coping.

Each level of managerial stress represents a myriad of potential stressors that must be identified. Administrators begin to control their four-stage stress cycle (figure 1) by searching for a set of demands, stressful situations, or what we might simply refer to as stressors. Meetings, interruptions, staff conflicts, drop-in visitors, and rules and regulations are all potential stressors. While a single telephone interruption may not cause a great deal of grief, couple the interruption with an unexpected and unwanted drop-in visitor, an irate staff member, and a backlog of paperwork and what you may have is the makings of your first tension headache of the day.

Setting the Stage

What does an educational manager's typical day consist of? The following scenario may depict what an educational manager such as a principal does on any given day. The morning begins with the sound of the alarm, a hurried breakfast, a quick kiss to spouse and kids, and the harried push-and-shove commute to the office just in time to arrive prior to the staff and students. If the principal is lucky, the early arrival permits a cursory perusal of the day's tasks, commitments, and committee meetings.

Planning time is abruptly interrupted by the onslaught of urgent calls, crises, or calendar changes. Five cups of coffee, four teacher drop-ins, three committee meetings, two irate parents, and one call from the superintendent later, the principal realizes that it's time to grab a sack lunch and gobble it down on the way to the next appointment.

The afternoon is productive but hectic, saved by the dismissal bell, which signals the beginning of relatively quiet contemplation time. But alas, a parent conference, faculty emergency, and student discipline problem have all coveted the principal's late afternoon schedule.

In the evening, family commitments come second to the endless school and community meetings, clubs, and social events that an educational manager is expected to attend. Monday through Friday is spent reacting to the urgent demands of parents, teachers, students, and the central office, while Saturdays, Sundays, and evenings seem to be the only times a principal can keep up with the paperwork and/or ponder future plans in a more proactive rather than reactive stance.

Principals love people, and that is why they <u>are</u> principals, but the stress headache and activated peptic ulcer at the end of a frenzied day make them wonder whether being a principal isn't hazardous to their health.

Can you identify <u>which</u> stressor activated the peptic ulcer or tension headache? Probably not. A 10:27 a.m. stress attack could

hit due to a series of interruptions throughout the first few hours of the morning or a serious confrontation with an insubordinate student. Remember, as we mentioned earlier, stress can crop up from a single event or a series of events. Let's explore each possibility further.

## Synergetic and Isolated Stress

Within a few minutes one telephone interruption combined with another and another on top of an already overloaded day creates more tension than if each stressor had arrived and been dealt with separately. In essence, the interaction of stressors becomes synergistic; that is, a minor irritant combined with several others becomes explosive, whereas each experienced individually may cause little or no stress. This results in what we call synergetic stress--the cumulative action of separate stressors having total effect greater than the sum of their individual effects.

In contrast to synergetic stress, we experience the situation where one event, by itself, is dramatic enough to cause a major stress reaction. Receiving an unjustified appraisal, not meeting a deadline, and being called in front of a group for an instant analysis of a complex problem on why your school levy failed all represent situations significant enought to create fear, anxiety, and an inability to respond adequately. This single stressful event represents what we term an isolated stressor.

## The Stress Log

A necessary precursor to managing stress, whether synergetic or isolated, is to recognize stress as a problem and acknowledge that something must be done to reduce it. If you agree on this central point, then take the first positive step and consciously identify the sources. The stress log in exercise 1 represents the most helpful tool to identify what troubles you as an administrator. It was developed with three purposes in mind:

(1) to identify significant synergetic and isolated stressors affecting you

(2) to search for reoccurring patterns of school stress

(3) to estimate the impact of stress on your day

The log is based on the assumption that we can mentally perceive what is bothering us without solely relying on such physiological devices as the Galvanic Skin Response instrument. While the task of assessing what stresses us through self-perception is difficult, the stress log represents a useful tool to accomplish this goal.

Specific instructions on how to use your stress log are outlined below. After reviewing them, start your log this week and continue recording stressors for at least a two-week period.

Instructions: Before leaving work each afternoon, record the following:

Column 1: Write the single most stressful event that occurred on your job e.g., conflict with a teacher.

Column 2: Write the most stressful series of related events that occur on your job e.g., frequent telephone interruptions.

Column 3: Indicate your numerical assessment of how the day went. Do not contemplate too long but give your first impression from "1" (not very stressful) to "10" (very stressful).

After you have kept a log for a week, read over your list of stressors and add at the bottom of the log any other stressful situations that usually occur but for some reason did not during this particular week. Then, review your entire log and see if certain ones reappeared several times. If so, is there a pattern to their reoccurrence? For example, do you find yourself consistently plagued by drop-in visitors? Is this your primary source of synergetic stress? Regarding your isolated stressors, are you troubled by staff blowups and conflicts? Is there a relationship between your synergetic and isolated stressors? If so, what is it and can you generalize about their sources?

Do not forget to reflect on your scores in column 3. What kind of work week did you have? Did most of your daily stress levels rise to the seven-to-ten-point range? What was your average daily stress level for the week?

Follow these first week reflections with a second week stress log. Some new troublesome stressors may surface from the second week's log. You may also begin to see possible patterns or cycles of

Exercise 1

STRESS LOG

Stress can come from a single dramatic incident (Isolated Stress), or from a cumulation of less dramatic related incidents (Synergetic Stress).

For one week, at the end of each working day, describe:

1. The most stressful single incident that occurred on your job (confronting a staff member, etc.)
2. The most stressful series of related incidents that occurred on your job (frequent telephone interruptions, etc.)
3. How your day went. Indicate from "one" (not very stressful) to "ten" (very stressful) the approximate level of your stress for each day.

| | 1) Single Incident | 2) Series of Related Incidents | 3) Daily Stress Level |
|---|---|---|---|
| Monday Date: | | | |
| Tuesday Date: | | | |
| Wednesday Date: | | | |
| Thursday Date: | | | |
| Friday Date: | | | |



Please indicate below other stressful incidents which usually occur, but did not during this particular week.

1.

2.

stress reoccurrence. Did you find Tuesdays bogged down with too many and too inefficient meetings? Are Thursdays wrought with staff in-fighting and personality conflicts? Are some days typically more stressful than others?

Use your stress logs to note all the different kinds and sources of administrative stress as well as to observe their daily patterns and weekly cycles. If you find your work repetitive and predictable, your stressors will follow the same pattern, not only daily and weekly but monthly, quarterly, and yearly. Not all of your stressors will be identified from a two-week stress log. A more systematic and comprehensive inventory of potential administrative stressors will be introduced later in this Bulletin. For now, let's ask ourselves what it is about administration that makes it so stressful. Do you face inherent problems and processes that cannot be avoided?

## The Nature of Managerial Work

Researchers know more about "the motives, habits, and most intimate arcania of the primitive peoples of New Guinea or elsewhere than (they) do of the denizens of the executive suites."[3] However, Mintzberg's research of managerial activities provides interesting insights into what managers do--not in the traditional sense of planning, controlling, organizing, and evaluating--but in terms of activities that make up the day. Of particular significance to the problem of managerial stress is the fact that work is characterized by (1) an unrelenting pace; (2) brevity, variety, and fragmentation; and (3)

preference for live action,[4] as shown in figure 3. Pitner's study of educational executives found superintendents' pattern of activities similar to the executives in Mintzberg's study.[5]

The Unrelenting Pace

Very few breaks are taken during normal office hours as managers plow through the mail (an average of thirty-six pieces per day), telephone calls, meetings (eight per day), and other hurried activities that consume every spare moment of time from their early arrival to late evening departure. The only time for coffee is during meetings, while lunch usually is accompanied by formal or informal meetings.

Presumably one of the major reasons for this unrelenting pace is the open-ended nature of a manager's job. The perpetual preoccupation with work results from never having the pleasure of knowing, even temporarily, that one's work is done. No matter what level of responsibility, there seems to be a gnawing preoccupation with the feeling that there is always more to be done.

Brevity, Variety, and Fragmentation

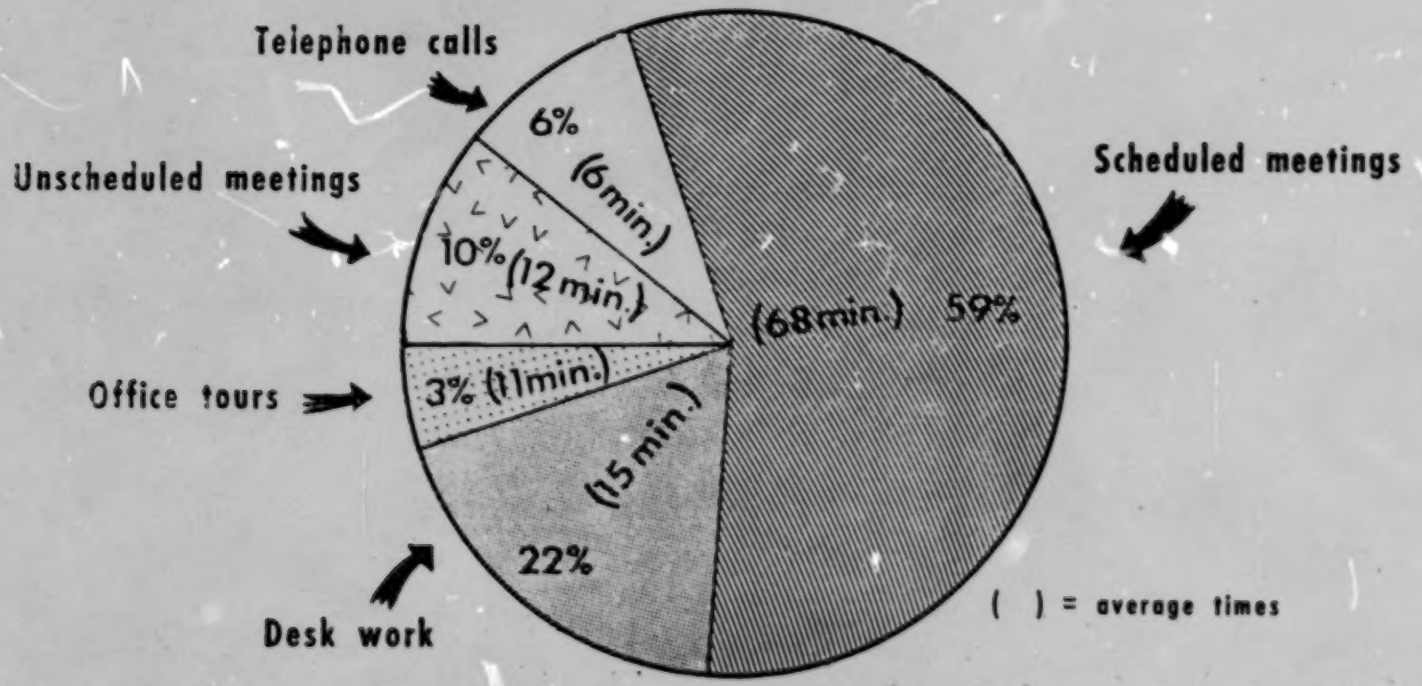
Managers average thirty-six written and sixteen verbal contacts each day, each contact dealing with a distinct and separate issue. Telephone calls average six minutes, uninterrupted desk work fifteen minutes, unscheduled meetings twelve minutes, and scheduled meetings over one hour. This type of fragmentation and brevity challenge the effectiveness of "managers" in the true sense of the word.

Morning activities cannot be distinguished from the afternoon's work. Even the same activities that are done daily do not take place

# THE NATURE OF MANAGERIAL WORK

## Brevity, Variety, Fragmentation and Live Action

### Distribution of Hours and Average Minutes per Activity*




*Based on three weeks of observation of chief executives' work. Mintzberg, H. The Nature of Managerial Work. San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1973.

at a specific time during the day or on consistent days of the week. While certain monthly and quarterly cycles exist in some organizations, specific activity schedules, such as a time in the morning for planning, probably do not exist.

Thus, the brief encounter with each activity, the variety of activities, and the lack of an activity pattern require managers to shift gears quickly and frequently. In effect, they are susceptible to developing a stress-laden profile, rushing from one project or task to another, day by day, and week by week, and rarely receiving satisfaction from tangible, completed objectives.

Live Action Preference

Managers are attracted to the more active tasks of work, preferring activities that are current, specific, well-defined, and nonroutine. Their environment typically is one of a stimulus-response reaction, not allowing them to gravitate toward effective planning, reflective thought, or other potential stress-reducing strategies.

To a great degree, therefore, the manager's work is characterized by an unrelenting pace, brevity, variety, fragmentation, and constant live action--all contributing to managerial stress.

One of the most important discoveries in stress research is that control over one's occupation is a critical factor in determining the degree of job stress encountered. Unfortunately, control, the important element in safeguarding jobs from becoming too stressful, has become increasingly unattainable at the managerial level. We no longer have full command over schools and students. The characteristics described by Mintzberg and Pitner contribute to this loss of

control. Work overload, too much responsibility without authority, inability to resolve differences with superiors, and excessively high self-expectations also contribute to stress disorders.

## Assessing Your Stressors

The key to stress reduction rests with the wise old adage that suggests we should seek "the courage to change the things we can, the serenity to accept those we cannot, and the wisdom to know the difference." In other words, we need to identify the causes of the stressors we can control and resolve them. Those we cannot control, which are inherent in our job, we must learn to live with and attack their symptoms rather than causes.

The next series of exercises will help you to meet four objectives: (1) identify all your possible on-the-job stressors, (2) assess the relative impact of each, (3) list the most bothersome ones, and (4) decide the amount of control you have over each. Your stress logs provide the first clues. Most administrators would protest that a one- or two-week log may not produce a comprehensive listing of all potential stressors. The data from your log coupled with the Administrative Stress Index fulfills this purpose.

The items on the Administrative Stress Index were compiled from several sources. First, seventy administrators were asked to keep stress logs much the same as you did in exercise 1. Next, a survey was conducted of educational administration job descriptions in search for additional components not already mentioned in the seventy logs.

Finally, other instruments purporting to assess occupational stress were investigated for additional items. The compilation of items from all three sources resulted in the thirty-five-item Administrative Stress Index in exercise 2.

To what extent do each of these work-related situations cause you concern? Some will bother you more than others. Read through each item and rate them from "1" (rarely or never bothers you) to "5" (frequently bothers you). After you have answered all thirty-five questions, review your stress log(s) in exercise 1 in search of other specific stressors not listed in the original list of thirty-five. If you find more, add these stressors in the blank spaces provided and give them each a "1" to "5" rating as well.

### Areas of Administrator Stress

Another method of reviewing and analyzing your stressors would be to find general areas of administration into which your stressors fall. Table 1 portrays five managerial categories into which the thirty-five items in exercise 2 can be placed. Administrative constraints deals with stressors related to time, meetings, workload, and compliance with federal, state, and organizational rules and regulations. Administrative responsibilities relates to tasks characteristic of nearly all management positions, including supervision, evaluation, negotiations, and gaining support for programs. Interpersonal relations includes resolving differences between parents and schools, between staff members, and between subordinates and superiors. Intrapersonal conflict centers around conflicts between performance and one's

internal beliefs and expectations. Role expectations deals with stress caused by a difference in expectations of self and the various people serviced.

Can you draw any conclusions from the type of stressors and general stress areas that characterize your work? For comparative purposes, tables 2 and 3 show the results of a survey of 1,200 Oregon school administrators from superintendents to vice principals.[6] Its findings conclude that the most bothersome situations educational managers face are rules, meetings, personnel conflicts, evaluations, heavy workloads, high self-expectations, and telephone interruptions. Conversely, their least bothersome encounters were with public speaking, social expectations, unclear responsibilities, and other circumstances centered around role expectations.

Note that five of the top ten stressors in table 2 were within the "administrative constraints" area. "Interpersonal relations" and "intrapersonal conflict" each had two of the top ten while the "administrative responsibility" area had only one. Interestingly enough, none of the "role expectation" stressors appeared in the top listing; five are reflected in the least stressful category.

While you may want to review your own stressors and areas of stress in light of this normative data on what generally affects other administrators, what really counts are the stressors troublesome to you. The problem with being a school administrator many times rests with the growing responsibilities evolving into overdemanding roles--of controller, motivator, persuader, fire-fighter, and preserver of the culture. The administrator becomes a stress prisoner as depicted in figure 4, rather than a person.[7]

Exercise 2

Administrator Stress Index

A. School administrators have identified the following thirty-five work-related situations as sources of concern. It is possible that some of these situations bother you more than others. How much are <u>you</u> bothered by each of the situations listed below? Please circle the appropriate response.

| | Not Applicable | Rarely or Never Bothers Me | | Occasionally Bothers Me | | Frequently Bothers Me |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Supervising and coordinating the tasks of many people | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Feeling staff members don't understand my goals and expectations | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Knowing I can't get information needed to carry out my job properly | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Thinking that I will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of those who have authority over me | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Trying to resolve differences between/among students | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Feeling not enough is expected of me by my superiors | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Having my work frequently interrupted by staff members who want to talk | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Imposing excessively high expectations on myself | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Feeling pressure for better job performance over and above what I think is reasonable | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Writing memos, letters, and other communications | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Trying to resolve differences with my superiors | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Speaking in front of groups | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Attempting to meet social expectations (housing, clubs, friends, etc.) | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Not knowing what my supervisor thinks of me, or how he/she evaluates my performance | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know (colleagues, staff members, students, etc.) | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Feeling I have to participate in school activities outside of the normal working hours at the expense of my personal time | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Feeling that I have too much responsibility delegated to me by my superior | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Trying to resolve parent/ school conflicts | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Preparing and allocating budget resources | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Handling student discipline problems | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. Being involved in the collective bargaining process | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. Evaluating staff members' performance | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. Feeling that I have too heavy a workload, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27. Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. Feeling that the progress on my job is not what it should or could be | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. Administering the negotiated contract (grievances, interpretation, etc.) | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of my job are | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. Feeling that meetings take up too much time | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. Trying to complete reports and other paper work on time | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. Trying to resolve differences between/among staff members | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. Trying to influence my immediate supervisor's actions and decisions that affect me | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. Trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Other situations about your job that bother you | | | | | | |
| _____ | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| _____ | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Table 1

AREAS OF ADMINISTRATIVE STRESS

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSTRAINTS

1. Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls
2. Having my work frequently interrupted by staff members to talk
3. Writing memos, letters, and other communications
4. Feeling that meetings take up too much time
5. Feeling that I have too heavy a workload, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal day
6. Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies
7. Trying to complete reports and other paper work on time

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITY

1. Supervising and coordinating the tasks of many people
2. Speaking in front of groups
3. Preparing and allocating budget resources
4. Evaluating staff members' performance
5. Administering the negotiated contract (grievances, interpretations, etc.)
6. Trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs
7. Being involved in the collective bargaining process

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

1. Feeling staff members don't understand my goals and expectations
2. Trying to resolve differences between/among students
3. Resolving differences with my superiors
4. Trying to solve parent/school conflicts
5. Handling student discipline problems

6. Trying to resolve differences between staff members

7. Trying to influence my immediate supervisor's actions and decisions that affect me

INTRAPERSONAL CONFLICTS

1. Feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job

2. Feeling that I can't get information needed to carry out my job properly

3. Imposing excessively high expectations on myself

4. Attempting to meet social expectations (housing, clubs, friends, etc.)

5. Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know (colleagues, staff members, students, etc.)

6. Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me

7. Feeling that the progress on my job is not what it should or could be

ROLE EXPECTATIONS

1. Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of my job are

2. Feeling that I have too much responsibility delegated to me by my superior

3. Feeling I have to participate in school activities outside of the normal working hours at the expense of my personal time

4. Not knowing what my supervisor thinks of me, or how he/she evaluates my performance

5. Feeling pressure for better job performance over and above what I think is reasonable

6. Feeling not enough is expected of me by my superiors

7. Thinking that I will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of those who have authority over me

Table 2

TOP ADMINISTRATIVE STRESSORS

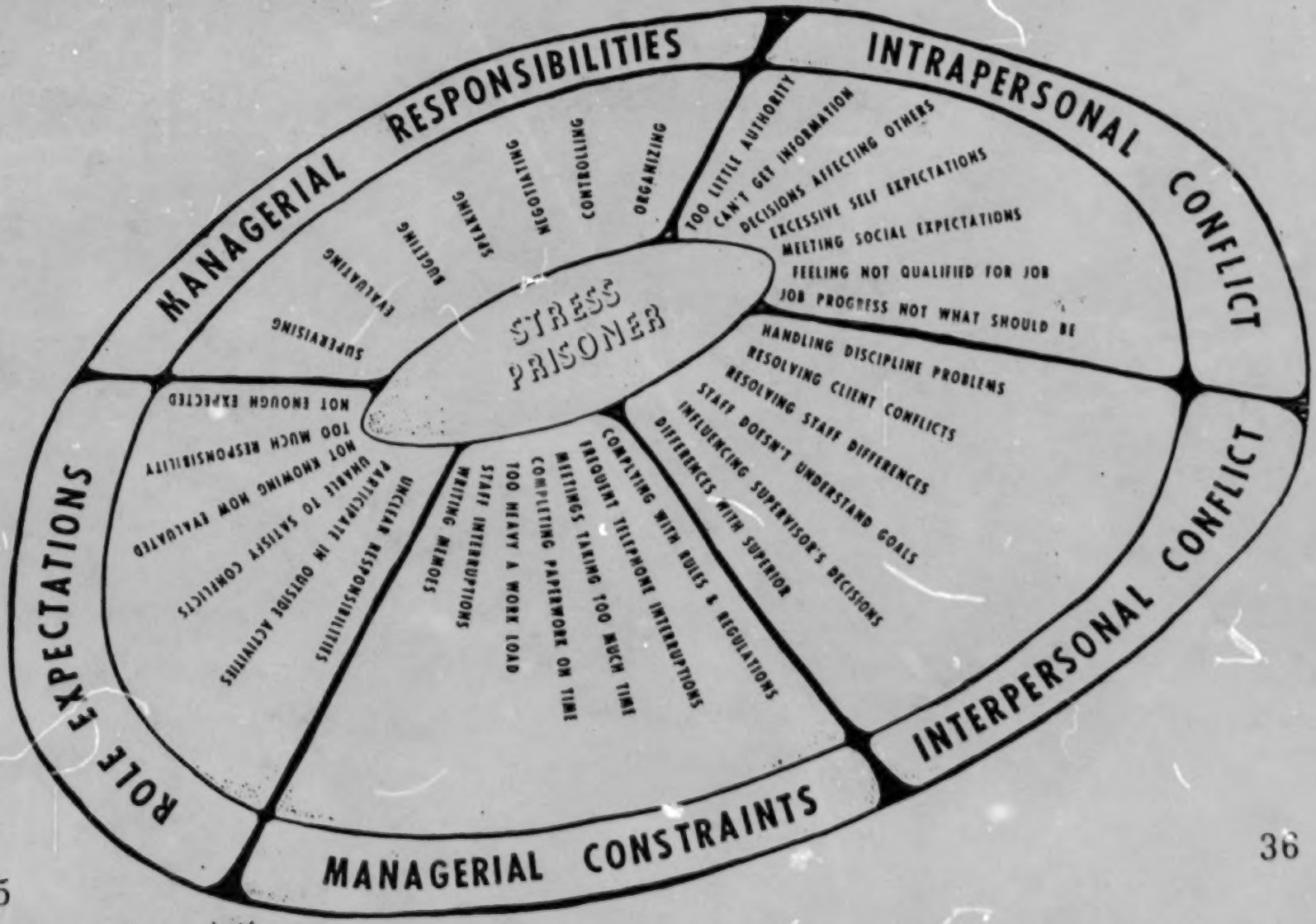
| Rank | Item | Managerial Area |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies | Administrative Constraints |
| 2 | Feeling that meetings take up too much time | Administrative Constraints |
| 3 | Trying to complete reports and other paperwork on time | Administrative Constraints |
| 4 | Trying to gain financial support for programs | Administrative Responsibilities |
| 5 | Trying to resolve personnel conflicts | Interpersonal Relations |
| 6 | Evaluating staff members' performance | Administrative Responsibilities |
| 7 | Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know (colleagues, staff members) | Intrapersonal Conflict |
| 8 | Feeling that I have too heavy a workload, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day | Administrative Constraints |
| 9 | Imposing excessively high expectations on myself | Intrapersonal Conflict |
| 10 | Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls | Administrative Constraints |

Table 3

LOW ADMINISTRATIVE STRESSORS

| Rank | Item | Managerial Area |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Feeling not enough expected of me by my superiors | Role Expectations |
| 2 | Feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job | Intrapersonal Conflict |
| 3 | Feeling that I have too much responsibility delegated to me by my supervisor | Role Expectations |
| 4 | Trying to resolve differences with my superiors | Intrapersonal Relations |
| 5 | Attempting to meet social expectations | Intrapersonal Conflicts |
| 6 | Being unclear of the scope and responsibilities of my job | Role Expectations |
| 7 | Speaking in front of groups | Administrative Responsibilities |
| 8 | Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me | Intrapersonal Conflicts |
| 9 | Not knowing what my supervisor thinks of or how he/she evaluates my performance | Role Expectations |
| 10 | Feeling pressure for better job performance over and above what I think is reasonable | Role Expectations |

# IDENTIFYING MANAGERIAL STRESSORS



## Stress Control

The previous self-diagnosis of stressors starts you into your stress management program. Now, review the stressors in exercise 2 and list the top five that are most bothersome to you. Ask yourself whether each of those stressors could be internally controlled and managed by you, or is beyond your control and therefore externally induced. As you read down your list of five, place a check to the right of each stressor under the "I" (if you can internally control and manage the stressor) or the "E" (if it is external to your personal control).

From the items in exercise 4, the Administrator Stress Index, list below the top five most bothersome situations you encounter. Also indicate whether these items are primarily internally or externally controlled.

| Items | I | E |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |
| 5. | | |

By using this technique of categorizing stressors into external and internal control factors, one begins to develop a strategy for "stress control." The strategy is simple. For these stressors where internal control is possible and the actual cause of the stress can be attacked, manage it through the "Seven Steps to Managing Stress" process introduced in the next section.

When the stress is externally induced and attacking the cause is not feasible, the strategy here is to mask the stressor through the use of such techniques as meditation, jogging, proper nutrition, and positive mental attitude. However, in reality most stressors lie somewhat within our internal control and therefore the strategy of managing stress by attacking the cause becomes much more beneficial than masking it by only addressing the symptoms.

Before proceeding with the stress reduction strategies let us consider how we can help our colleagues and staff members to reduce their stress as well as our own.

## THE ADMINISTRATOR AS A STRESS FILTER

Managers from superintendents to vice principals eventually discover the need for a two-pronged approach to identifying stress simply because stress arises in two ways. First, administrators themselves experience pressures from their own jobs that affect their performance. Second, if other educators and staff experience intolerable levels of stress, then their work also lacks quality.

Identification of your own stress to the exclusion of your team's becomes counterproductive and irresponsible. Since it is your team that helps you accomplish educational goals, it would be self-defeating to ignore their stressors. Together you should develop a proactive rather than a reactive plan to prevent, and not merely mask, potential stressors.

### Management Team Stress Traps

Stressors that plague you equally plague your team. Review a dozen of these stress traps in table 4 and keep the following observations in mind:

1. Compliance with rules. All school administrators except vice principals agreed that the number one source of stress was compliance with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies. This stress escapes no one, and even permeates the building level.

2. Attending meetings. Almost the entire management team concurred that the second most bothersome activity was the overburdensome number of meetings. This was especially true for the central

Table 4

STRESS TRAPS OF THE MANAGEMENT TEAM

| STRESS TRAPS | Management Team: All Team Members | Central Office: Superintendent | Central Office: Asst. Superintendent | Central Office: Central Office Staff | High School: Sr. High Principal | High School: Sr. High Vice Principal | Jr. High: Jr. High Principal | Jr. High: Jr. High Vice Principal | Elem.: Elementary Principal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Complying with rules and regs. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 |
| Attending meetings | 2 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 2 |
| Completing paper work | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| Gaining public approval | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 5 |
| Resolving parent conflicts | 5 | 14 | 14 | 14 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| Evaluating staff's performance | 6 | 8 | 15 | 25 | 4 | 13 | 3 | 10 | 4 |
| Affecting lives of people | 7 | 6 | 11 | 12 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 7 |
| Too heavy work load | 8 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 12 | 10 |
| Expectations on self | 9 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 11 | 9 | 12 | 11 | 8 |
| Telephone interruptions | 10 | 15 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 7 | 10 | 13 | 9 |
| Outside school activities | 11 | 12 | 9 | 23 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 12 |
| Student discipline | 12 | 26 | 32 | 31 | 15 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 11 |
| Number of Administrators in Study | 1156 | 110 | 50 | 115 | 123 | 120 | 88 | 66 | 354 |

office staff and elementary and secondary school administrators. Although still an irritant meetings were ranked by superintendents only fifth--probably because they are in charge of them, and the degree to which one is in control significantly reduces its impact.

3. Completing reports on time. Superintendents appeared to be most troubled with completing paper work and written communications. But apparently all levels of administration fall into this stress trap, suggesting that reports are a perennial problem throughout school administration.

4. Gaining public support. It was not surprising to find that gaining public approval and/or financial support for school programs caused great concern. Given that the major responsibility for gaining support lies primarily with the superintendent's office, it is logical that more tension was generated there than at the building level.

5. Resolving parent-school conflicts. Secondary school administrators found resolving parent-school conflicts to be highly stressful (ranked third) while the central administration seemed less affected by this stressor, presumably because they have minimum contact with them. However, it was rather astounding that superintendents perceived this as less troublesome; they generally interact with parents in many conflict situations.

6. Evaluating staff. Principals at all levels were bothered more by evaluation than other groups. Nevertheless, it averaged sixth for the team, since evaluation is not an easy task for any administrator to perform.

7. Decisions affecting others. Those administrators with evaluation and overall supervisory responsibility--primarily superintendents and principals--were most troubled by having to make decisions affecting the lives of their colleagues, staff members, and students.

8. Heavy work load. The members of the management team ranked "too heavy a work load to finish during the normal day" anywhere from seventh to twelfth. While not the primary source of stress, overwork still produces excessive frustrations.

9. High self-expectations. Not ranked consistently as one of the most significant pressures, "imposing excessively high self-expectations" was sixth and seventh highest for central staff, assistant superintendents, and superintendents. Building principals seemed to be less bothered by self-expectations--possibly because jobs are more definable at the building level than the central office.

10. Telephone interruptions. Central office staff and secondary school administrators were more bothered by frequent telephone interruptions than other administrators.

11. Participating in school activities outside normal working hours. High school administrators were annoyed most by this stressor. It was the high school vice principal's number one ranked stress trap, probably due to the fact that most high schools offer their extracurricular programs at night and on the weekends, thus encroaching on the vice principal's time.

12. Handling student discipline. As might be expected, the differences among administrators in the stress encountered by handling

student discipline directly related to the amount of contact they had with students. High school vice principals and junior high school principals and vice principals were bothered most by student conflicts. When this stress trap was examined on the basis of years of experience, it was discovered that as the years increased, the stress of handling student discipline declined. A possible explanation might be that one becomes more acclimated to the effects of discipline problems the longer one has to contend with them.

Of the twenty-three (of thirty-five) stress traps not previously mentioned, only one unique to a specific position is not yet accounted for--collective bargaining. Superintendents and assistant superintendents ranked this third and fourth, respectively, which confirms the notion that more strain is generated by collective bargaining among top-level administrators than among those in the lower echelon. Note that when we examined collective bargaining in terms of years of experience, the longer an educator had been in administration the more he or she found negotiations distressing.

A final review of table 4 reveals that all eight positions of the management team share many common stressors. What plagues superintendents, therefore, similarly plagues other members of the team, from the central office to the schools. Only the rank order differs.

Because they share common problems, the entire team can work together to help each other reduce their barriers to effective school management. The process of helping your team might best begin with their self-assessment on the Administrator Stress Index. Next would

be the task of developing a stressor profile for the entire team. This can be accomplished by having the team reach agreement on stressors of primary importance and common concern. The form presented in exercise 3 represents an excellent device to facilitate this process.

A word of caution: Be careful in administering any kind of self-assessment instrument to your staff. Review the basic instrumentation rules in table 5 before embarking on this exercise.

## The Secretary-Manager Team

No work group is complete without considering the most integral element in any manager's performance--the secretary-manager team. International management consultant R. Alec Mackenzie testifies that "of the many resources contributing to the manager's effectiveness, none is more critical than his/her secretary."[8] It is imperative, then, that you and your secretary work together to reduce each other's stress.

The secretary-administrator strategy differs slightly from that used for the management team. First, we must realize that secretarial stressors may be inconsistent with those of administrators. In fact, the most significant stress may come from...the boss. For example, a study of over two hundred secretaries from schools and district offices reveals their most bothersome activities:

1. Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls and drop-in visitors
2. Waiting to get information needed to carry out my job

Exercise 3

## PROFILE OF TEAM STRESSORS

**Instructions to the manager:**

(1) List your top ten stressors in order of importance in Column A.

(2) Record weights for the same stressors of each team member in Column B, C, D, etc. Add additional stressors below your list.

(3) Add the weight for individual stressors and place them in the Total column.

(4) Establish new ranking by weight in the last column to obtain the top ten stressors for your team.

| Manager's Top Stressors | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | TOTAL | RANK |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 10 | | | | | | | | | |
| | 9 | | | | | | | | | |
| | 8 | | | | | | | | | |
| | 7 | | | | | | | | | |
| | 6 | | | | | | | | | |
| | 5 | | | | | | | | | |
| | 4 | | | | | | | | | |
| | 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | |

Adapted from R. Alec Mackenzie's "Timewaster" chart (unpublished). Presented in Portland, Oregon, January 14, 1977, at Time Management Conference.

Table 5

DO'S AND DON'T'S OF INSTRUMENTATION

If you plan to use the Managerial Stress Index with your staff, remember a few rules which, if followed, will help your session be a success.[1] You may want to repeat the index at six-month intervals and keep baseline data to spot progress and basic trends.

* Do take the instrument yourself first.
* Do point out to your staff how the instrument fits into the goal's effective performance.
* Do encourage participants to be open in describing themselves on the instrument.
* Do plan plenty of processing time.
* Do watch for participants who may be experiencing difficulty in integrating their scores with their conception of themselves.
* Do solicit feedback on your profile: particular things you do in instrumentation that helped and impeded learning.

* Don't use the word "test."
* Don't give instructions while your staff is reading.
* Don't give too many instructions at once.
* Don't put undue pressure on your staff to publish scores that may make them appear "sick."
* Don't diagnose their weaknesses for them.
* Don't label your staff members.

[1] Adapted from Instrumentation in Human Relations Training, by J. W. Pfeiffer and R. Heslin, University Associates, 1973.

3. Imposing excessively high expectations on myself
4. Feeling that I have too heavy a workload, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day
5. Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me
6. Being treated as less important by professional staff
7. Working in a noisy, disruptive environment
8. Needing to see my boss and not being able to
9. Trying to get the boss to complete reports and other paperwork on time
10. Being bored by routine tasks

Both you and your secretary must independently select your top ten stressors and rank them in order of importance. A separate inventory of potential secretarial stressors is provided in the Secretarial Stress Index (exercise 4). In addition, exercise 5 contains a Secretary-Manager Stressors Profile, which will help both of you to identify common stressors that can be attacked together.

For now, the purpose of identifying stressors for you, your colleagues, and your secretary has been served.

Exercise 4
SECRETARIAL STRESS INDEX

A. The following work-related situations have been identified as sources of concern. It is possible that some of these situations bother you more than others. How much are you bothered by each of the situations listed below? Please circle the appropriate response.

| | Not Applicable | Never Bothers Me | | Occasionally Bothers Me | | Frequently Bothers Me |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Waiting to get information needed to carry out my job properly | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Thinking that I will not be able to satisfy the demands of those who have authority over me | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Feeling not enough is expected of me by my superiors | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Having my work frequently interrupted by staff members who want to talk | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Imposing excessively high expectations on myself | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Feeling pressure for better job performance over and above what I think is reasonable | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Typing memos, letters and other communications | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Trying to resolve differences with my superior(s) | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Not knowing what my supervisor thinks of me, or how he/she evaluates my performance | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12. Feeling I have to participate in work activities outside of the normal working hours at the expense of my personal time | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Feeling that I have too much responsibility delegated to me by my supervisor | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Trying to get the boss to complete reports and other paperwork on time | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Feeling that I have too heavy a workload, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Complying with the organization's rules and policies | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Feeling that the progress on my job is not what it should or could be | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Being unclear on the scope and responsibilities of my job | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Being treated as less important by professional staff | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Working in a noisy, disruptive environment | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Trying to resolve differences between employees | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Being bored by routine tasks of my job | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. Needing to see my boss and not being able to | NA | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Other situations about your job that bother you | | | | | | |
| _____ | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| _____ | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| _____ | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| _____ | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Exercise 5

## SECRETARY-MANAGER STRESSORS PROFILE

Instructions to the manager:

(1) List your top ten stressors (from the Administrative Stress Index, exercise 2) assigning weighted values in Column A from "10" for the most stressful to "1" for the least stressful.

(2) Identify your secretary's top ten stressors (from Secretarial Stress Index) and assign similar weighted values.

(3) In Column B record your secretary's weighted values next to your values. If your secretary has some different stressors than you, list these in the blank spaces below your top ten stressors.

(4) If you have two or three secretaries repeat steps 2 and 3 and indicate their values in Columns C and D respectively.

(5) Add Columns A and B (C and D if applicable) to arrive at your combined score. Place these scores in the Total column.

(6) Rank the combined scores in the final column (Rank) with the highest score receiving a #1 rank, second highest #2, and so on. You now have a priority listing of Secretary-Manager Stressors.

After this has been completed the profile can be used as a basis for comments, discussion, and questions between you and your secretary. Ultimately you will want to resolve these stressors by jointly completing the "Seven Steps to Managing Stress" exercises.

| Manager's Top Ten Stressors | A | B | C | D | Total | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | | | |
| 2. | | | | | | |
| 3. | | | | | | |
| 4. | | | | | | |
| 5. | | | | | | |
| 6. | | | | | | |
| 7. | | | | | | |
| 8. | | | | | | |
| 9. | | | | | | |
| 10. | | | | | | |

## SEVEN STEPS TO MANAGING STRESS

The previous sections provided the background and information necessary to begin a comprehensive administrative stress reduction program. Like so many administrators, you may have gone directly to this section, omitting the others because you need immediate answers to your particular problems. If this is the case, I strongly recommend that you go back and read the previous sections. The basics must be understood before lasting solutions can be selected.

Also, before you begin this section consider its basic assumption: Most administrative stressors can be controlled and should be attacked at the cause. Good executives learn to manage the causes of problems, not just mask their symptoms. While aspirin provides temporary relief, managing stressors produces permanent results. Before you take the quickest and easiest path to reduce your tension, try the seven step plan. It will help you successfully reduce your stress by controlling your problems rather than having them control you.

### Goal of the Seven Step Plan

When you use the Seven Steps to Managing Stress, your main goal will be to first dissect and then reconstruct your personal stressors. In doing this, you will analyze the causes of each stressor, examine potential solutions, and finally take corrective actions. When you have finished this chapter, you should be able to develop and implement your own program without the aid of machines, technicians or medical devices. Ultimately, this will result in a decrease in your stress level.

Each step is part of a sequence of activities that will help you go from being controlled by your stressor to being in control of it. The steps are:

1. Identify your most bothersome stressors and select one to resolve
2. Search for the causes of this stressful event
3. Generate a set of possible solutions to remedy the causes
4. Specify a plan of action you will take to alleviate one cause
5. Develop a timetable to implement your plan of action
6. Set a date and method for how you will follow up and evaluate the effectiveness of your plan
7. Investigate the potential problems or unintended consequences (additional stress) your action plan may have created

An administrator who understands the stress principles and concepts presented in the previous sections and can apply the above set of strategies to his or her stress problems, will gain several advantages. First, since the plan is segmented into seven parts--each an integral sequence in the overall process--you will always know where you are and what has to be done. Second, when you adopt this plan as part of your managerial problem-solving style, you will then have a framework to guide you in processing information to resolve future managerial and personal crises. Third, such a process can easily be explained to your colleagues and staff, and can thus assist them in their stress reduction efforts. Finally, whereas any single quick and easy stress remedy may be applicable to only a few, this process can help all administrators control their stress.

Nevertheless, the plan has one major weakness. You may find yourself avoiding the seven step plan because it seems too systematic--too rigidly mechanical. True, it is systematic, that is what makes it work so well. It presupposes that administrators have the organizational skills and foresight to put a program into action and see it through to its completion.

## Conditions for Success

The effectiveness of the seven step plan depends on the fulfillment of four conditions. These conditions are represented by the acyronym CASH, signifying the payoff you can expect by having the right amount of Control over your job, a facilitating Attitude of commitment, an openness to learn new Skills, and the dedication to develop the skills into helpful Habits. Let us look at each of these conditions to understand how CASH can provide the mental and physical relief from overburdensome debits of stress.

1. Control

Managers under stress often believe that they are out of control, that they cannot change the circumstances that cause them stress. However, the changes needed to overcome stress many times do lie within your powers. You can change and influence your own behaviors and, to some extent, the conditions of your job. This is a basic assumption that must be held in order to progress any further with the stress program.

Pressures can be avoided by shifting from being controlled by one's job to being in control of it. While all educators have the ultimate choice of alleviating stress by quitting their jobs, we hope the

driving force of stress does not lead to that choice for the manager. Somewhere in between burning out and dropping out lies an area of influence where administrators can exert some discretionary control and cope with the pressures.

Remember, of course, our goal is neither to rid ourselves of, nor control, all tension. Some stress goads us to success and, with the aid of a systematic stress program, can become a friend rather than a foe of the effective administrator.

2. Attitude

The next critical ingredient to "cashing" in on the stress plan rests with having the right attitude, the commitment to making it happen.

The first commitment takes the form of a set time to learn some new skills and habits, to begin the seven step process. Do you have the time and energy? If so, block off some uninterruptible time on your daily calendar to begin the stress plan. Preferrably take a couple of hours in the early morning in your office on a predictably slow day. Have your secretary protect your time by screening all calls and visitors.

Now that you have your time blocked off for undivided attention you must commit your energy to produce effective responses to the seven steps of the process. If some unforeseen crisis arises and robs you of your private time, reschedule another appointment with yourself just as you would for an important patron. Also remember that once you have begun your plan you must resist demands that might disrupt your execution time.

One method that some administrators find helpful in fulfilling their commitments is instituting a contract--something all educational administrators should understand and respect. Contract in this sense means making an agreement with yourself to complete the seven step plan by putting it in writing. Table 6 represents a sample contract. Notice the option for enlisting the help of one of your colleagues or secretary.

Upon completing your contract, don't forget to reward yourself for a job well done. Your reward may be in the form of money, personal time off, or a relaxing day by yourself in the mountains or on the beach. No matter what it is, make it obtainable since its purpose is to keep you committed to your stress plan so you can proceed with an attitude of enthusiasm.

3. Skill

Now that you have the commitment you must develop the skills needed to fulfill your plan. Skill-building represents another characteristic of successful administrators. The ability to grow with the job and its new challenges is the essence of effective coping behavior.

The notion that good educators are born, not made, must be dispelled and replaced with the opposite truism. New skills can give desperate administrators new ways of controlling their actions, feelings, and behaviors. In fact, if we assume people learned the counterproductive behaviors which now cause them stress, reducing stress is merely a matter of substituting those unproductive behaviors with new skills conducive to coping.

Table 6
A SELF-CONTRACT
FOR
SEVEN STEPS TO MANAGING STRESS PROGRAM

I, _____, hereby commit my time and energy to completing the Seven Steps to Managing Stress Program, During the next month I will schedule the following times each day to develop, execute, and evaluate my progress toward completion of the program.

Activity Monitor

Date: _____

| | Scheduled | Completed |
|---|---|---|
| 7:00 | | |
| 7:30 | | |
| 8:00 | | |
| 8:30 | | |
| 9:00 | | |
| 9:30 | | |
| 10:00 | | |
| 10:30 | | |
| 11:00 | | |
| 11:30 | | |
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| 12:30 | | |
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| 1:30 | | |
| 2:00 | | |
| 2:30 | | |
| 3:00 | | |
| 3:30 | | |
| 4:00 | | |
| 4:30 | | |
| 5:00 | | |
| 5:30 | | |
| 6:00 | | |
| 6:30 | | |

Notes:

_____

Each week after meeting my commitments as scheduled above, I will reward myself with _____.

OPTIONAL

At any time I feel it necessary I will ask _____ for his/her assistance in keeping my commitments and providing me encouragement. In return I will reward my helper with _____.

Date: _____ Signed: _____

Granted, this is easier stated than started. Nevertheless, the purpose of this Bulletin is to provide you the framework and system to do just that.

4. Habit

Learning what skills reduce stress is not enough. The volumes of managerial self-help books available and on-the-job training seminars today provide most administrators with the ability to distinguish effective from ineffective practices. However, the impact of both is usually short lived. This knowledge must be formulated into a plan of action and implemented before any meaningful change can take place. Skills have to be practiced until they become part of one's routine or behavior before they can produce any appreciable change in performance.

For instance, consider the controversial "open door policy," which states that administrators must be continually accessible to teachers, staff, and patrons. We also know it is a perennial promoter of interruptions, one of the most significant stressors affecting administrators. A simple skill to screen interruptions would be to selectively close your door for uninterrupted planning time. While the skill is simple, the process of making it a habit becomes very difficult. How did you feel the first time you closed your office door to allow yourself time in your office alone? If you were like most you became anxious, nervous, and uncomfortable. Before, you could hear what was going on outside your office but now the closed door represents isolation from outside interests. As a result you begin to

respond negatively and before you know it you've interrupted yourself by emerging from your office for a self-imposed break.

Administrators who have gone through time management training know the positive effect a reasonable "closed door" skill can have on their effectiveness. But the old habit feels more comfortable and thus prevails. This is the exact same dilemma you will face when attempting to behave differently based on your stress plan. We can predict that you will feel more comfortable using your own, old style but you must resist this temptation in order to build the habits that make a successful stress reduction program.

A Word of Caution

Even if you have all four components in the CASH formula working for you, you may still encounter difficulties. If you initially choose a stressor that is too cumbersome move to an easier stressor. Also you may wish to seek assistance in diagnosing and solving the stressful situation. It is best to select a stressor over which you have more control and a greater chance of success. But if you need a helper, do not hesitate to ask for assistance, because what bothers you most likely stresses your colleagues as well. Two key resources are your administrative team and your secretary, both of whom would probably welcome the opportunity to resolve common office stressors affecting all of you.

Now that you have the CASH to begin the stress program, start with step one and proceed sequentially through step seven.

## Step 1--Stressor Selection: Where Should I Start?

The objective of the first step is to select a stressor you wish to resolve. As a beginning, the Administrator Stress Index in the previous section gives you a list of potential problems to pursue. You listed the top ten most bothersome stressors from this index in exercise 2 so why not start there. Write these stressors in exercise 6 below.

To this list add any other major problems you have currently identified as unique to your position, organization, and/or personality. Consider other experiences you have recently encountered. You should now have between ten and fifteen problem areas from which to select one to work on through the duration of the seven step plan in this chapter.

The next question is where to begin. Before making your decision, consider three criteria useful in making your selection. First, reconsider the issue of control. You will recall that in the last section you were asked whether each of the stressors was internally controlled and managed by you, or externally induced and beyond your control. Read down the list of stressors and put a check in the "control" column next to each stressor if you feel you can personally change it.

If you are having trouble deciding your degree of control, some assistance may be helpful. Let us look at what other administrators typically have said regarding their control over stressful situations. Table 7 summarizes how they felt about their ability to change and

## Exercise 6

## Stressor Selection

Instructions:

1. List below your top ten stressors identified in exercise 2.

2. Add three to five other significant stressors you have recently encountered.

3. Read down your list of stressors and check column 1 if you feel you have control over this stressor, and explain why.

4. For each stressor over which you have indicated control, check column 2 if you also believe your efforts to change it will be successful, and explain why.

5. Finally, for those stressors you have indicated both control and success, check column 3 if you believe resolving this problem is important to your effective performance, and comment on your decision.

| Stressors | (1) Control? | Comments | (2) Success? | Comments | (3) Importance? | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | | | |
| 2. | | | | | | |
| 3. | | | | | | |
| 4. | | | | | | |
| 5. | | | | | | |
| 6. | | | | | | |
| 7. | | | | | | |
| 8. | | | | | | |
| 9. | | | | | | |
| 10. | | | | | | |
| 11. | | | | | | |
| 12. | | | | | | |
| 13. | | | | | | |
| 14. | | | | | | |
| 15. | | | | | | |

Write below the stressor you have selected which meets all three criteria of control, success, and importance.

** _____ **

successfully control their problems. Be sure to review not only their perception of internal versus external control but their comments as to why they rated them as they did.

For example, administrators saw their influence over rules and regulations as minimal at the national and state level but stronger within their own district and school. However, they saw their ability to control the quality and quantity of meetings (second only to rules/ regulations) more optimistically. At first glance you may say, "I can't control what goes on in meetings, nor can I dictate how many I'm scheduled to attend." But aren't some meetings within your realm of control, at least the ones you call to order? Consider similarly each stressor on your list, indicate whether you can control it or not, and state the rationale for your decision.

In the next column you consider the issue of success. Not only is it critical that you have control over your stressor, but being successful in your first stress program is equally important. Your successes will reinforce your confidence and commit you to continue resolving more difficult stressors as they arise. For those stressors you have indicated possible control, ask this second question: If I attempt to resolve this stressor, am I likely to succeed? Place your answer in column 2 and again provide a rationale for your decision. If you feel that success with "meetings" is dependent upon the cooperation of your staff and colleagues, then set this problem aside until you can enlist their assistance. On the other hand, you may feel "too heavy a workload" is within your control and can be successfully

Table 7
What Administrators Say About Controlling Stress

| Managers' Top Stressors | Comments on Control |
|---|---|
| 1. Complying with state, federal and organizational rules and policies. | "I have little influence over national or state regulations but I can influence the rules and regulations within my organization." |
| 2. Feeling that meetings take up too much time. | "I can control the meetings I call to order and can even suggest changes in the ones I'm called to." |
| 3. Trying to complete reports and other paperwork on time. | "Most can be completed in time if priorites are assigned and I block off time to complete them without those constant interruptions." |
| 4. Trying to gain financial support for programs. | "Financial control many times lies beyond me, however my personal influence can sometimes free up some funds." |
| 5. Trying to resolve personnel conflicts. | "If I confront the issue and individual early, and head-on, I can usually avoid needless flare-ups." |
| 6. Evaluating staff members' performance. | "Evaluation is never an easy task but if I approach it with trust, honesty, and the employee's long-term welfare in mind even the toughest decisions become easier." |
| 7. Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individuals that I know (colleagues, staff). | "One never likes to hurt colleagues but if done with care and altruism it makes those decisions much easier." |
| 8. Feeling that I have too heavy a workload, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day. | "Since I'm usually the one that imposes the workload, I'm the one that has to reduce it." |
| 9. Imposing excessively high self-expectations. | "Given that it is 'self-imposed' and 'excessive' this is one that I have to work on myself." |
| 10. Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls. | "If I'd use my secretary properly I guess there's no reason why I couldn't get control over my interruptions." |

reduced. Most administrators might agree, since much of their overwork stems from workaholic attitudes and unwillingness to give up responsibility, both factors they can do something about.

By now you should have five to eight stressors that have met the first two criteria. Lastly, determine how important resolving these stressors is to your effective performance. Do not necessarily equate importance with urgency. Think more in terms of present barriers you need to remove in order to continue being a productive educator. Record your answer to this third criterion in column 3 and again write down the basis for your decision.

A few critical stressors should now have emerged, meeting all three criteria: under your control, within the possibility of success, and of importance to your job. Select one of these remaining few and write it at the bottom of the form in exercise 6. If nothing stands out as being more critical than others, then select the one which, if resolved, will also reduce the stress of others in your organization. In this way you can act as a stress reliever for yourself and at the same time a stress filter for your staff.

### Step 2--Causes: How Did I Get It?

Failure to resolve stressors stems from one basic fact: the cause has not been discovered. Everything has a cause, from a menacing cough to a mental collapse. To rid yourself of these malignant effects you must first know how they came to be.

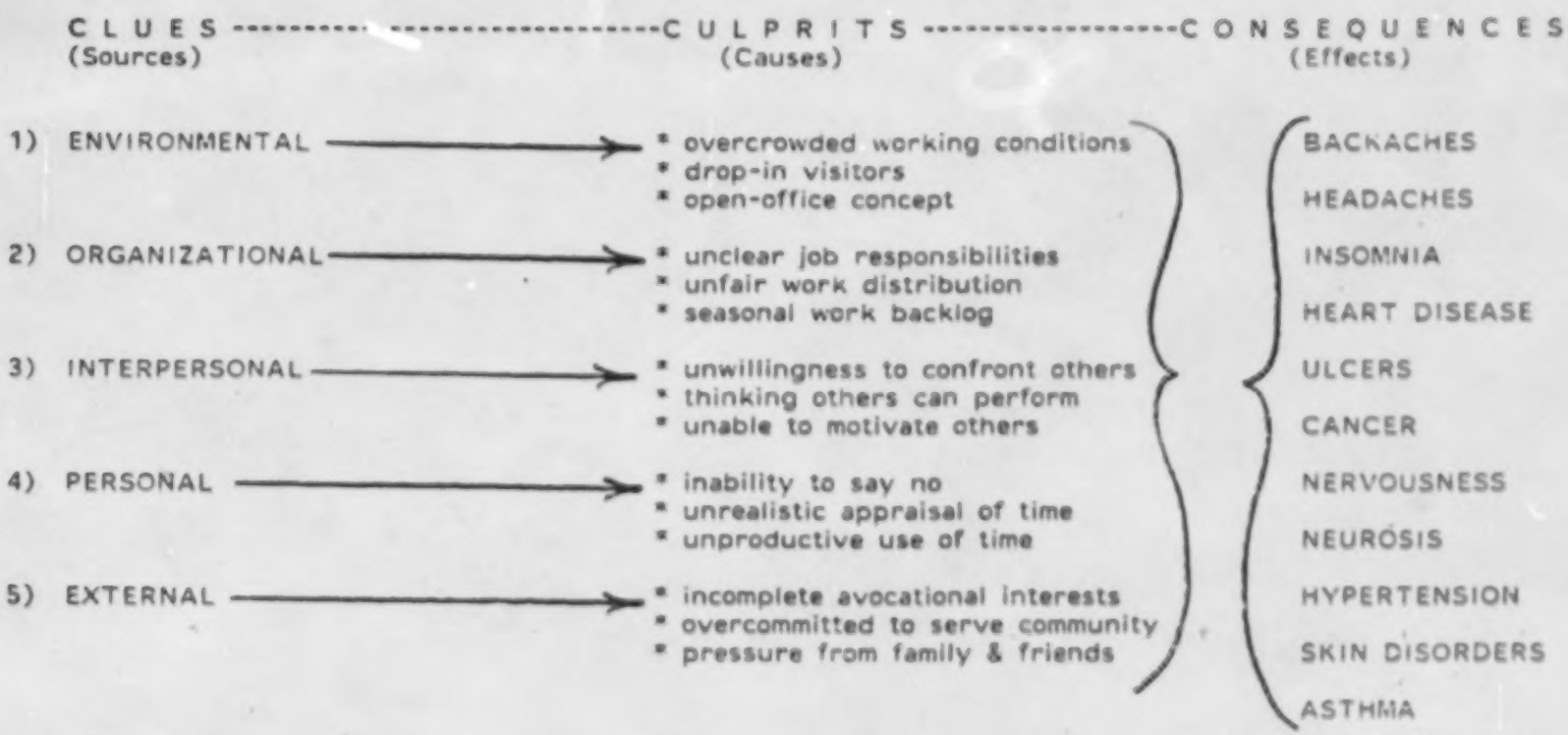
Think of the search for causes in terms of detective work. For instance, figure 4 lays out the case of "the heavy workload." We are already familiar with the consequences of this mystery--headaches, backaches, ulcers, insomnia, and sometimes death. Our task now is to do some sleuthing--what created the overload?

Begin by looking for clues in the most obvious places. Four sources provide our possible clues: environmental conditions (overcrowding, excessive noise, heat and cold); organizational factors (role conflict, job ambiguity and managing people); interpersonal influences (personality conflicts, mistrust, lack of support, and overcompetitiveness); and personal propensities (driving too hard, unrelenting pace, and being hyperalert). To this add other significant pressures external to your work activities, including demands for time and attention from family, friends, recreation, hobbies, and other interests outside the realm of the working world.

Within each of these sources lies potential causes. Unlike simple problems, stressors result from a multitude of causes. Much as in the case of Agatha Christie's thriller, Murder on the Orient Express, the detective must dismiss the simple single-murderer solution as too obvious and then find as many as a dozen culprits who also contribute equally to the crime. Recognizing that a stressor may have multiple causes and originate from several sources, let us see if we can disclose the suspects in the "heavy overload" case. Listed below are a few clues from each source. Can you add any others?

Figure 4

The Case of the "Heavy Work Load"



ENVIRONMENTAL

* overcrowded working conditions leading to inefficiency
* open-office concept (office without walls) encouraging drop-in visitors and interruptions
* _____
* _____
* _____

ORGANIZATIONAL

* unclear delineation of job responsibilities
* unfair work distribution among staff
* _____
* _____
* _____

INTERPERSONAL

* unwillingness to confront others
* thinking others cannot do as good a job
* _____
* _____
* _____

PERSONAL

* unproductive use of time
* failure to distinguish high from low priorities
* inability to say no to additional requests
* inability to obtain closure on tasks and issues
* unrealistic appraisal of time
* inability to delegate to staff
* _____

EXTERNAL

* overcommitments to serve on community committees
* family and friends wanting more of your evenings and weekends
* incomplete home projects and hobbies
* _____
* _____

Now turn your attention to the stressor you selected in step 1. Write it out in section A of exercise 7. In section B list all the possible causes of your stressful event. To the right of each of the

causes indicate its source: either personal, external, environmental, organizational, or interpersonal.

Step 3--Solutions: What Can I Do About It?

The solution step generates alternatives that will alleviate the causes you have identified in step 2. But you must do steps 1 and 2 first. To go right to solutions without first exploring the causes may lead you in the wrong direction or to the wrong conclusion.

Generating alternatives is not a haphazard activity, but a logical, thoughtful, and careful search for specific actions that will alleviate the cause. Use the causes identified in exercise 7 as a set of problem statements from which to develop your solutions. Begin by transferring the causes from exercise 7 to exercise 8.

Next you will identify solutions for each cause. Let's explore this. To come up with sound solutions you need to logically draw from your past experiences and your knowledge of management practices as well as creatively look forward for innovative ideas suitable to your situation. For example, to attack the cause of "unrealistic appraisal of time it takes to complete tasks," a logical solution would be to first keep a personal time log to audit how and where your time is presently spent. It may be helpful to refer to Ferner's book, Successful Time Management (John Wiley and Sons, 1980) or Mackenzie's The Time Trap (McGraw-Hill, 1972) for useful time log techniques.

Administrators have always been trained and rewarded for their logical thinking. Now it is the time to nurture your creative thought process. Since many management tools may not be applicable in

Exercise 7

IDENTIFICATION OF CAUSES

Section A: From exercise 6, write below the stressor you want to resolve.

_____

_____

Section B: List as many causes of the above stressor as possible, indicating to the right the source of the cause (Environmental, Organizational, Interpersonal, Personal, or External).

| CAUSES | SOURCES |
|---|---|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| 4. | |
| 5. | |
| 6. | |

resolving some common causes of stress, you may have to create new solutions to fit your specific work situations. Basically you have four reservoirs of creative solutions available to you. First, consult other people in your school district. One idea tends to generate others, and the more viewpoints you can gather the better the set of alternatives you will have to select from. Second, check with consultants or third parties who have the advantage of being distant enough to see what we cannot see ourselves. All too often the solution is right under our nose, hence out of sight. Third, refer to the volumes of self-help books readily available in today's bookstores. While all do not provide sound judgment, use your own good sense to glean the good from the trash. Finally, search your own subconsciousness for innovative ideas. Our logical, domineering left side of the brain sometimes acts as a constraint to creative thinking. Many techniques are available to help you reactivate a more balanced search for solutions.

Across from the causes listed in exercise 8 fill in your solutions. Whatever you do, just keep thinking. As Samuel Johnson concluded, "There isn't a problem the human mind can devise that the human mind cannot also solve."

Step 4--Plan of Action: What Solution Best Resolves the Stress?

Now you are ready to take action. But let us first briefly review what you have accomplished so far. In step one you selected

Exercise 8
Generating Solutions

Instructions: 1. Relist the causes you identified in exercise 7 in the column marked "causes" below.
2. Across from each cause identify a solution which will attack the problem.

| CAUSES | SOLUTIONS |
|---|---|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| 4. | |
| 5. | |
| 6. | |

a stressor as your target for alleviation. Step two generated a list of causes followed by step three, which identified solutions to each of the causes.

Your present task is to review your set of solutions and select one solution as a plan that suits you best. Your choice should not be taken lightly and left to chance. Consider a definite strategy upon which to select your plan. First, be wise and start with a small, modest and manageable solution. No step or plan of action is too small. A grandiose, unrealistic and overperfectionist plan may be discouraging and lead you to total abandonment in the long run. Adopt a one-step-at-a-time strategy of change.

Second, your first plan should be chosen on the basis of creating the least change and disruption to your routine and organizational flow. While at first this may seem contrary and counterproductive to achieving great gains, remember that with change comes stress too. Too much change, we have discovered, may cause too much disruption and resistance to your plan. Therefore, select the plan that has the greatest potential for being unobtrusive (but still productive) to your general managerial style.

Third, choose a plan that assures you success the first time around. Your success will reinforce your confidence and increase your effectiveness in implementing more difficult changes in the future.

Finally, and most importantly, work on one plan at a time. If you attempt too much by juggling several plans simultaneously you

may become confused, discouraged, and eventually end up more stressed than ever.

Now, select your plan of action from the list of solutions you generated previously and write out your plan in section A of exercise 9 below. Remember to make your decision based on a gradual, unobtrusive, successful, and singular approach.

What impact do you feel your plan will have on reducing or alleviating your stress? Typically plans of action can be categorized into any one of five tension-reducing actions.[9]

1. Interim action--usually the first kind of action taken to keep you going while you are still searching for the long term solution to the cause.
2. Adaptive action--appropriate when you find out that the causes are unresolvable and unremovable. You then revert to minimizing the effects of the cause, since it usually lies outside your influence or control.
3. Corrective action--eliminates the cause that produced the stress in the first place. This is what all administrators desire; the most efficient and effective course of action.
4. Preventative action--removes the possible cause of the stressor, or its probablity of occurring before it attacks. Such action is typically known in the world of health as preventative medicine or high level wellness.
5. Contingency action--provides stand-by actions to offset or minimize the effects of a serious stress attack. The administrator decides which actions will keep possible causes from

Exercise 9
Developing a Plan of Action

Instructions:

1. Review your set of solutions in exercise 8, select one, and write it out as a plan of action in section A.

2. Indicate whether your plan is corrective, interim, or adaptive in section B and give both the strengths and weaknesses of your plan.

3. If your plan is adaptive or interim, is there anything you can do to reattack the cause at a later date? If so, note your intentions in section C.

Section A: My Plan of Action is to _____

_____

_____

Section B: My Plan is primarily ____Corrective
____Interim
____Adaptive

Its major strengths are

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Its major weaknesses are

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

(Opional)
Section C: I plan to reattack the cause by

_____

_____

_____

occurring. Some engineers refer to this as contingency planning.

The first three actions (interim, adaptive, and corrective) play a major role in the Seven Steps to Managing Stress plan. The last two, however, define what managers can do to alleviate stress before it arises.

The importance of recognizing the differences in the capabilities and purposes among the first three kinds of action cannot be emphasized enough. Without recognizing the strengths and limitations of each, you may find yourself believing you have corrected the cause when you have really only adapted to the tension level. Therefore complete exercise 9 by identifying the type of plan you have selected. Is it corrective, adaptive, or interim? If it is adaptive or interim have you also planned to reattack the cause later with a truly corrective action? If you plan to alleviate, rather than just temporarily reduce your tension level, you should make that commitment now as a footnote to your action plan.

Step 5--Implementation: How, When, and Where Should I Embark on My Plan

Now you have identified the causes of stress, suggested solutions, and decided on a plan of action. Your next task is to learn to integrate your plan into your everyday managerial style. It is much like learning to play a game of golf. If, for instance, you want to be an all-around golfer, you have to develop the ability to perform each

required skill successfully. Playing a complete game of golf depends not only on learning the basics of how to drive, chip, and putt, but good golfers must also learn to avoid water hazards and blast their way out of sand traps.

Merely reading books or making mental pictures does not produce the great golfers of today. It takes practice to perfect skills. Similarly, you learn how to manage hazards and traps by analyzing the situation, taking practice swings, compensating for conditions beyond your control, and finally standing up there and blasting your way out.

Everything you have done to this point leads to this critical step. Now is your time to put your new plan into action. In exercise 10 you first restate what you will be doing (e.g., prioritizing my tasks each day into high payoff and low payoff activities); where (e.g., in my office); and how often and when (e.g., first thing in the morning at 8 a.m.). Finally, do it! Stop analyzing, planning, and prolificating and start producing, for "today is the first day of the rest of your life."

### Step 6--Evaluation: How Will I Know If It Worked?

Any plan should contain steps to review and assess your progress, followed by modification of the action if it produced unwanted results. This is the purpose of steps six and seven. The follow-up evaluation alerts you whether the plan you set in motion actually created the desired results. In other words, has your plan been

carried out? Have you developed some proficiency in the new skill area?

To check whether you have followed through, take out your daily appointment book and see if you have kept your appointments to practice your skill at the time and [illegible] you specified in the implementation phase. If your plan was to prioritize your tasks every morning before engaging in your daily routine, check to see how proficiently and diligently you have adhered to your plan.

On the other hand, if your plan has not worked out as originally scheduled, be flexible and reset your path. You may have set unrealistic expectations for yourself that now have to be readjusted.

Next you will want to know if this skill has now become internalized. If so, has it helped reduce your stress? A word of caution should be kept in mind. Don't expect too much. First, review your plan to see if it was a corrective, interim, or adaptive course of action. If it was corrective your goal should have been to alleviate the cause. Interim and adaptive actions are more limited and should only be expected to reduce the cause until corrective action can be taken.

Summarize your evaluation of your actions in exercise 11. Again do not expect too much from your first plan of action. Be willing to modify your action and if need be set your sights a bit lower for now.

## Exercise 10

## Implementing Your Plan

Instructions:

(1) Indicate below the activities you will use to fulfill your plan, where you will conduct them, how often, and when they will be completed.

| Activities | WHERE | HOW OFTEN | WHEN |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |
| 4. | | | |
| 5. | | | |
| 6. | | | |
| 7. | | | |
| 8. | | | |
| 9. | | | |
| 10. | | | |

Step 7--Unintended Consequences: What Additional Stress Have I Caused

As has been stated before any change by itself will be stressful. Your plan has most likely changed your behavior and the way you interact both with your staff and the organization as a whole. Therefore your plan, whether successful or not, has had some impact on other elements critical to you and your organization's effectiveness.

Assess what additional stress and strain you may have caused the organization due to your new plan of action. Write these below in exercise 12. Some promising places you might look for these side effects are in your own performance, the generation of ideas, effectiveness of group processes, influences on others, and expenditure of time, material, and money.

For example, if your goal was to reduce your present workload and your course of action was to prioritize your tasks into high- and low-payoff activities, have you in fact delegated or eliminated some of your low-payoff activities? If so, your plan should have reduced some of the pressures and overcommitments in your job. However, in place of the time taken for attending to low-payoff tasks you may have accepted additional responsibilities. Delegating these low-payoff items to your staff may have also caused a slowdown in their productivity. In other words, you may have accomplished the intended action of your plan, but in the meantime have incurred additional costs along with the intended benefits. These undesirable and unwanted results are what you might refer to as negative unintended consequences.

## Exercise 11

### Follow-up Evaluation

1. By what means did you check to see if your plan was successfully implemented?_____

   _____

2. Was your plan fully implemented? _____Yes _____No

   If not, why?_____

3. What results were obtained?_____ _____

   _____

4. Can your plan be modified to give you better results? _____Yes _____No

   If so, how?_____

   _____

_____ _____

Exercise 12

Assessing the Impact

A. What additional benefits did you receive from your plan that you had not expected?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

B. Besides the benefits, what were some unintended negative consequences or additional strains your plan created?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

C. Should any of these negative consequences be alleviated?

_____Yes

_____No

D. If so, in what ways could your plan be modified to rectify the unwanted consequences?

_____

_____

_____

E. Go back to steps 4 and 5 and modify your plan and implementation strategy accordingly.

Ask yourself if these consequences should also be alleviated and rectified. If so, make modifications in your plan to reduce these unwanted side effects.

## Concluding Comments

Once you have mastered and fully understand each of the seven steps in the stress reduction program, all seven components can easily be condensed and summarized into one useful worksheet. For example, the seven step worksheet shown in table 8 represents a summarization of the stressor "too heavy a workload."

It is now time to use this worksheet in developing your next stress reduction plan. Blank worksheets can be found in appendix A. Remember that the first and all subsequent plans must be maintained in order to sustain your progress. This process is incremental and synergetic; one plan builds on another and another, resulting in the development of a managerial wellness profile. As each skill becomes a habit and part of your repertoire of coping techniques, be sure to maintain these skills so you don't regress or fall back on old, unhealthy habits. As Mark Twain once remarked, "quitting smoking is easy, I've done it hundreds of times." Make sure any stress you have taken off, stays off.

Table 8

SEVEN STEPS TO MANAGING STRESS WORKSHEET

I. Most Bothersome Stress Event: Too heavy a work load, one that cannot be finished in a day

| II. CAUSES | III. SOLUTIONS | IV. SPECIFIC ACTION PLAN |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Unrealistic appraisal of time | 1. Conduct time schedules | a) The plan is to: Concentrate on high payoff tasks. |
| 2. Inability to say "no" | 2. Gain assertive skills | |
| 3. Overcommited to work over family | 3. Set your family/job goals | b) Type of Action |
| 4. Unclear delineation of responsibilities | 4. Request specific job description | / / Corrective / / Preventive<br>/ / Interim / / Contingent |
| 5. Cannot distinquish between high and low priorities | 5. Concentrate on high payoff tasks | / / Adaptive / / Other |

V. STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Activity: Develop high payoff and low payoff lists
2. Where: In the office at my desk with no interruptions
3. How Often: Daily for two weeks
4. When: Every morning at 8:30 a.m.

VI. FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION

1. Did I write out my lists every morning?
2. Were the high payoff tasks completed first?
3. Did I actually delegate or eliminate any low payoff tasks
4.

VII. NEGATIVE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

1. My boss became upset with incomplete tasks important to him
2. Work became too regimented and not as carefree
3. I created an overload for my staff by delegating too many tasks to them
4.

*** MODIFICATIONS OF PLAN NEEDED? Since my boss needs to know what I am concentrating on (high payoffs), I should communicate with him/her periodically to seek concurrence with my plan.

APPENDIX A

## SEVEN STEPS TO MANAGING STRESS WORKSHEET

I. Most Bothersome Stress Event: _____

| II. CAUSES | III. SOLUTIONS | IV. SPECIFIC ACTION PLAN |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | 1. | a) The plan is to: |
| 2. | 2. | |
| 3. | 3. | b) Type of Action |
| 4. | 4. | ☐ Corrective ☐ Preventive<br>☐ Interim ☐ Contingent<br>☐ Adaptive ☐ Other |
| 5. | 5. | |

| V. STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION | |
|---|---|
| 1. Activity: | 3. How Often: |
| 2. Where: | 4. When: |

| VI. FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION | |
|---|---|
| 1. | 3. |
| 2. | 4. |

| VII. NEGATIVE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES | |
|---|---|
| 1. | 3. |
| 2. | 4. |

*** MODIFICATIONS OF PLAN NEEDED?

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